

Current Class: [REDACTED]
Current Handling: [REDACTED]
Document Number: 1980BUENOS07156

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Channel: n/a

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 SSO-00 /031 W
-----121606 051323Z /50

O 051220Z SEP 80
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6644

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DECAPTIONED

E.O. 12065: GDS 9/5/86 (RUSER, CLAUS W.) OR-M
TAGS: SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: (U) DISAPPEARANCE AND REAPPEARANCE

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(☒) Release () Excise () Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: () In Part (☒) In Full

() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

1. ENTIRE TEXT

2. SUMMARY. AN ACTIVE TERRORIST HAS TURNED UP IN CUSTODY RATHER THAN REMAINING DISAPPEARED. THIS DEVELOPMENT IS MOST UNUSUAL AND SEEMINGLY FOLLOWS THE INTERVENTION OF PRESIDENT VIDELA AFTER A DEMARCHE ON THE CASE BY THE EMBASSY. IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL, HOWEVER, WHETHER THIS DEVELOPMENT REFLECTS A CHANGE IN THE WAY THE GOA WILL DEAL WITH ACTIVE TERRORISTS. IT IS, NEVERTHELESS, A PRECEDENT ON WHICH WE WILL SEEK TO BUILD. END SUMMARY.

3. ON AUGUST 28 THE EMBASSY WAS INFORMED OF THE DISAPPEARANCE OF AIXSA EDITH BONA, A 28-YEAR OLD ARGENTINE CITIZEN. ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMANT, A DISTANT RELATIVE OF BONA, BONA'S MOTHER-IN-LAW HAD BEEN CALLED TO A LOCAL POLICE PRECINCT IN BUENOS AIRES AUGUST 27 TO PICK UP BONA'S SMALL DAUGHTER. THE MOTHER-IN-LAW WAS TOLD BY THE POLICE THAT THE CHILD WAS BEING TURNED OVER TO HER AT BONA'S SPECIFIC REQUEST. OUR INFORMANT SAID THAT BONA'S MOTHER-IN-LAW WAS UNABLE TO LEARN ANYTHING FROM THE POLICE ABOUT BONA'S WHEREABOUTS AND THE FAMILY FEARED THAT SHE WAS DISAPPEARED. OUR INFORMANT ALSO STATED, MISTAKENLY AS IT TURNED OUT, THAT SHE UNDERSTOOD THAT BONA'S HUSBAND WAS

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LIVING IN MEXICO WHERE THE COUPLE HAD RESIDED FOR SOME TIME BEFORE BONA'S RETURN TO ARGENTINA.

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4. THOUGH THE INFORMATION WAS LIMITED WE BELIEVED IT WAS SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE OF A POSSIBLE DISAPPEARANCE. THEREFORE AN EMBASSY OFFICER RAISED THE MATTER IMMEDIATELY WITH A SENIOR MEMBER OF PRESIDENT VIDELA'S STAFF ON AUGUST 28. THE EMBOFF NOTED THAT IF IT WAS A DISAPPEARANCE, WE HAD TO BE CONCERNED FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS AND FOR THE EFFECT OF SUCH PRACTICES ON U.S.-ARGENTINE RELATIONS. THE EMBOFF ALSO OBSERVED THAT CONTINUED USE OF DISAPPEARANCE AS AN ANTI-TERRORIST TECHNIQUE IN EFFECT GAVE TO THE TERRORISTS A WHIP HAND IN U.S.-ARGENTINE RELATIONS. SO LONG AS MONTONEROS WERE WILLING TO UNDERTAKE SUICIDAL MISSIONS TO ARGENTINA AND THE SECURITY FORCES CONTINUED TO DESAPPEAR THEM, THE USG WOULD FACE SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES IN REBUILDING ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ARGENTINA.

5. THE ARGENTINE INTERLOCUTOR TOOK NOTE OF THE SPECIFICS OF THE CASE. HE ALSO MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE BROADER ISSUE OF DISAPPEARANCE IN U.S.- ARGENTINE RELATIONS. HE SAID THAT HE PLANNED TO RAISE THE ISSUE IMMEDIATELY WITH GENERAL CRESPI, PRESIDENT VIDELA'S CHIEF OF STAFF. WITHIN HOURS, THE ARGENTINE CALLED THE EMBOFF AT HOME TO INFORM HIM THAT ON THE INSTRUCTIONS OF PRESIDENT VIDELA, AS ISSUED BY GENERAL CRESPI, ARMY COMMANDER IN CHIEF GALTIERI WAS PERSONALLY TASKED WITH LOOKING INTO THIS MATTER.

6. FOLLOWING THIS EXCHANGE, BONA'S RELATIVE INFORMED THE EMBASSY THAT BONA'S "HUSBAND," MARTIN HERVASIO GUADEX, WAS ALSO MISSING IN ARGENTINA. OUR INFORMANT SAID THAT HER EARLIER INFORMATION THAT GUADEX HAD BEEN LIVING IN MEXICO WAS MISTAKEN. THIS REPORT WAS IMMEDIATELY PASSED ON TO THE GOA.

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7. ON SEPTEMBER 3 THE GOA INFORMED US THAT BONA WAS IN CUSTODY CHARGED WITH BEING AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE MONTONEROS. ACCORDING TO THE INFORMATION GOA PROVIDED, BONA HAD BEEN ARRESTED ON AUGUST 27 AND WAS "SUBSEQUENTLY" PLACED BEFORE A CIVILIAN JUDGE. THE GOA ALLEGES THAT SHE HAD BEGUN HER ASSOCIATION WITH THE MONTONEROS IN 1977, HAD RECEIVED TRAINING IN MEXICO IN 1978 AND HAD RETURNED CLANDESTINELY TO ARGENTINA IN 1979 ALONG WITH HER COMMON LAW HUSBAND. WHEN ARRESTED SHE WAS REPORTEDLY IN POSSESSION OF CODES, LIGHT ARMS, A GRENADE LAUNCHER, MUNITIONS AND AN OFFSET PRINTING PRESS.

3. GOA ALSO DENIED TO US THAT IT ALSO ARRESTED GUADEX WHO THEY ALLEGE IS A FUGITIVE.

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9. BONA'S SISTER CALLED ON THE EMBASSY SEPTEMBER 7. SHE VOLUNTEERED THAT BOTH HER SISTER AND GUADEX HAD BEEN MEMBERS OF THE MONTONEROS OPERATING CLANDESTINELY IN THE COUNTRY. SHE SAID THAT HER FAMILY HAD LITTLE DIRECT CONTACT WITH THEM. THE FAMILY HAS NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO SPEAK DIRECTLY WITH BONA SO SHE WAS UNABLE TO SAY WHETHER GUADEX HAD BEEN ARRESTED AT THE SAME TIME AS HER SISTER.

10. COMMENT: WITH ONE EXCEPTION, WE KNOW OF NO OTHER CASE IN WHICH AN ACTIVE MONTONERO TERRORIST SUCH AS BONA HAS TURNED UP ALIVE AND IN CUSTODY IN THE LAST YEAR. THE SINGLE EXCEPTION WAS THE DISAPPEARANCE OF A COUPLE AND THEIR CHILDREN DURING LAST YEAR'S VISIT OF THE IAHRC. FOLLOWING TREMENDOUS PUBLICITY THAT FOCUSED ON THIS DEISPPPEARANCE, THE WIFE APPEARED IN CUSTODY AND RECEIVED A LONG JAIL SENTENCE.

11. IT IS PROBABLE THAT THE EMBASSY'S INTERVENTION IN THIS CASE MOVED GOA IN POSITIVE DIRECTION. BONA'S REAPPEARANCE COULD MARK ANOTHER STEP TOWARDS THE RULE OF LAW AND AWAY FROM THE USE OF SUMMARY EXECUTIONS BY THE SECURITY FORCES IN THEIR OPERATIONS AGAINST TERRORISTS. BUT THIS HOPE IS FAR FROM ESTABLISHED, PARTICULARLY GIVE THE UNCERTAINTY

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CONCERNING GUADEX'S WHEREABOUTS. FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF OFFICIAL INFORMATION ON BONA, THE EMBASSY OFFICER INVOLVED IN THIS CASE ASKED HIS INTERLOCUTOR ON THE PRESIDENT'S STAFF IF BONA'S REAPPEARANCE REPRESENTED A DEFINITIVE CHANGE IN POLICY. THE ARGENTINE REPLIED THAT HE HOPED SO. HOWEVER, IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE ARGENTINE WAS UNABLE TO GUARANTEE THAT THE TACTIC OF DISAPPEARANCE HAS NOW BEEN LEFT BEHIND. NEVERTHELESS, THE EMBASSY WILL SEEK TO BUILD UPON THIS CASE TO ENCOURAGE THE GOA TO FOLLOW THE RULE OF LAW IN THE FUTURE.

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